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The Status of the Russian Church, 988–1037

A. D. STOKES

IN attempting to solve the problem of the status of the Russian Church in the years following the conversion of Russia by Vladimir I (978–1015), the modern historian must recognise that he has to contend with his 11th-century predecessor, the Russian chronicler who wrote the section of the *Povest' Vremennykh Let*¹ dealing with the events of this period. Since the publication in 1908 of A. A. Shakhmatov's monumental analysis of the *Povest'*,² it has been clear that there were parts of the story which the chronicler, far from wishing to record, deliberately tried to conceal.³ The measure of his success can be judged by the numerous theories put forward over the past fifty or sixty years in an attempt to fill in the gaps and to explain the ambiguities in his narrative. Thus, M. D. Priselkov suggested that, after his conversion, Vladimir I had placed the Russian Church under the authority of the archbishop of Ochrid.⁴ N. de Baumgarten⁵ and M. Jugie,⁶ on the other hand, are of the opinion that Rome was responsible for the establishment of a church hierarchy; whilst G. V. Vernadsky sees the Church 'as an autonomous unit under the authority of an archbishop, the primate of Tmutarakan'.⁷ N. Zernov⁸ has come to the conclusion that Vladimir was 'determined to keep the Church under his unchallenged control'⁹ and therefore appointed

¹ *Povest' Vremennykh Let*, ed. V. P. Adrianova-Peretts, Moscow, 1950, hereinafter referred to as *Povest'* in the text and *PVL* in the footnotes.

² A. A. Shakhmatov, *Razyskaniya o drevneyshikh russkikh letopisnykh svodakh*, St Petersburg, 1908.

³ See, in particular, A. A. Shakhmatov, 'Korsunskaya legenda o kreshchenii Vladimira' (*Sbornik statey posvyashchennykh V.I. Lamanskomu*, II, St Petersburg, 1906). Shakhmatov showed that Vladimir did not accept Christianity in Kherson, as the chronicler would have it (cf. *PVL*, I, pp. 59–83), but that he had been baptised in Kiev in 988 or 987, some two years before the attack on Kherson. The main points are recapitulated in N. Zernov, 'Vladimir and the Origin of the Russian Church' (*The Slavonic and East European Review*, XXVIII, no. 70, London, 1949, pp. 127–31). Shakhmatov's findings have rightly been accepted by the majority of scholars, although it should be noted that there are still those who uphold the accuracy of the account of Vladimir's conversion in the *PVL*—cf. E. Shmurlo, *Kogda i gde krestilsya Vladimir Svyatoy*, Prague, 1928; F. Dvornik, *The Making of Central and Eastern Europe*, London, 1949, pp. 171–3; M. V. Levchenko, *Ocherki po istorii russko-vizantiyskikh otnosheniy*, Moscow, 1956.

⁴ M. D. Priselkov, *Ocherki po tserkovno-politicheskoy istorii Kievskoy Rusi X–XII vekov*, St Petersburg, 1913, pp. 34–76; see also H. Koch, 'Byzanz, Ochrid und Kiev 987–1037' (*Kyrios*, III, 1938, pp. 272–84).

⁵ N. de Baumgarten, 'Saint Vladimir et la conversion de la Russie' (*Orientalia Christiana*, XXVII, 79, 1932).

⁶ M. Jugie, 'Les origines de l'Eglise russe' (*Echos d'Orient*, XXXVI, 1937).

⁷ G. V. Vernadsky, 'The Status of the Russian Church during the First Half-Century Following Vladimir's Conversion' (*The Slavonic and East European Review*, XX, 1941, p. 304).

⁸ N. Zernov, 'Vladimir and the Origin of the Russian Church' (*The Slavonic and East European Review*, XXVIII, 70–1, pp. 123–38, 425–38).

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

his own primate, Anastas of Kherson, who was bishop of Kiev in the period in question. F. Dvornik considers that the Russian Church was under the supervision of the archbishop of Kherson;¹⁰ but E. Honigmann¹¹ and others¹² hold the view that it was subordinated to the patriarchate of Constantinople from the time of Vladimir's conversion. These conflicting views, none of which has won general acceptance,¹³ seem to indicate that the chronicler's secret is as safe today as ever it was; but in point of fact this is not so. Thanks to the patient research of the scholars mentioned above, the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle have been found: what still remains to be done is to fit them together correctly.

The years between 988 and 1037 were among the most important in the whole history of the Russian Church. These were the formative years, and the chronicler-monks, whose declared aim was to trace and explain the origins of the Kievan state and its institutions, might have been expected to devote a great deal of space to them: to the ceremonies attending the arrival and installation of the new primate of the Kievan Church; to his biography, extolling his piety and achievements; to a description of the consecration of bishops and clergy and the propagation of Christianity in other centres of Russian life. What more inspiring subjects than these could there have been for the early chroniclers? Their only difficulty should have been in knowing how to marshal the mass of material at their disposal, in deciding where to begin. The *Povest'* tells a very different story.

Many of the years between 988 and 1037 have been left absolutely blank; others, such as the years 992 and 997, have been padded out with legends about the founding of Pereyaslavl' and the siege of Belgorod; whilst the events recorded under the remainder, with the exception of the long narrative of the martyrdom of SS. Boris and Gleb, are mainly secular in character: the campaigns of Vladimir, the struggle between Svyatopolk and Yaroslav, and later between Mstislav and Yaroslav. Comments on the life of the Church in this period are haphazard and ambiguous. Thus, under 989, the chronicler

¹⁰ F. Dvornik, *op. cit.*, pp. 177–9; *idem*, *The Slavs, Their Early History and Civilization*, Boston, 1956, p. 209.

¹¹ E. Honigmann, 'Studies in Slavic Church History' (*Byzantion*, 17, 1944–5, pp. 128–162).

→ V. Laurent, 'Aux origines de l'Eglise russe' (*Echos d'Orient*, XXXVIII, 1939, pp. 279–95); M. V. Levchenko, *op. cit.*, pp. 369–→ D. Obolensky, 'Byzantium, Kiev and Moscow: a Study in Ecclesiastical Relations' (*Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 11, 1957, pp. 23–78).

¹³ For criticism of the 'Bulgarian' theory, see A. A. Shakhmatov, 'Zametki k drevneyshy istorii russkoy tserkovnoy zhizni' (*Nauchno-istoricheskiy zhurnal*, 1914, 4; inaccessible to me); I. U. Budovnit, 'Ob istoricheskikh postroyeniyyakh M. D. Priselkova' (*Istoricheskiye zapiski*, 35, 1950, pp. 198–203); I. Snegarov, *Dukhovnokulturni vrazki mezhdu Balgariya i Rusiya prez srednite vekove*, Sofia, 1950, pp. 22 ff.; on the 'Roman' theory, see E. Honigmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 128 ff.; F. Dvornik, *The Making of Central and Eastern Europe*, pp. 173–5; on the 'Tmutarakan' theory, see Honigmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 131 ff.; Honigmann's theory, see F. Dvornik, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

relates that Vladimir built a church dedicated to the Holy Mother of God in Kiev and entrusted it to Anastas of Kherson,¹⁴ who had previously betrayed Kherson to the Russians by telling them how they could cut off its water supplies.¹⁵ The completion of the church is noted under 996, and it is recorded that Vladimir granted to it a tithe of all his possessions: this too was entrusted to Anastas.¹⁶ But the chronicler still does not explain who Anastas was: whether he was a bishop, a priest, or just a layman.¹⁷ The church is mentioned once again under 1007 when the relics of unnamed saints (or possibly of Vladimir's son and grandson, who had died in 1001 and 1003 respectively)¹⁸ are said to have been transferred to it.¹⁹ Finally, under 996, the chronicler refers to certain unspecified bishops who reassured Vladimir when he hesitated to execute robbers.²⁰

It is only from 1036—i.e. the year in which Mstislav died and Yaroslav the Wise became the sole ruler of Russia—that the chronicler begins to give precise information about the Church and its leaders. Under this year he links a title with a name for the first time when recording the appointment of Zhidyata as bishop of Novgorod.²¹ This may be regarded as the first trickle from the hitherto suppressed flood of information that finally bursts out under 1037. It is only from this date, if we are to believe our source, that Christianity, thanks to the tireless activity of Yaroslav, really began to take root in Russia. All that was accomplished was due to his piety and wisdom. He founded many churches, including St Sophia and the church of the Annunciation, and also a monastery. He appointed priests, gathered together scribes, and began the business of translation. Christianity began to bear fruit and to spread rapidly, and many took the tonsure. To sum up, in the words of the chronicler, while Vladimir had ploughed and prepared the soil, it was Yaroslav who sowed the seeds of Christian enlightenment.²² Two years later, under 1039, there is the first reference to a Russian metropolitan, Theopemptus, who is said to have consecrated the church of the Holy Mother of God, built by Vladimir.²³

It is impossible to escape the conclusion that once again, as in the case of Vladimir's conversion, the chronicler is trying to conceal something. The casual introduction of the Metropolitan Theopemptus, with no previous mention even of his existence, is strange, to say the least. And why was Vladimir's church reconsecrated? It cannot be thought that it was not consecrated during Vladimir's life-

¹⁴ *PVL*, I, p. 83.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

¹⁷ For a detailed examination of the many problems raised by Anastas, see N. Zernov, *op. cit.*, pp. 131-4.

¹⁸ *PVL*, II, p. 355; Zernov, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

¹⁹ *PVL*, I, p. 88.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 102-3.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 103: 'Svyashchena byst' tserky svyatyia Bogoroditsya, yuzhe sozda Volodimer, otets Yaroslavl', mitropolitom Feopemptom.'

time; neither is it possible to accept the suggestion that the chronicler had made a mistake and was really referring to the St Sophia, built by Yaroslav.²⁴ It is not simply a question of the wrong name, since the chronicler specifically qualifies it by adding 'which was founded by Vladimir'. It is these ambiguities about all the meagre information on Church affairs in the period in question, together with the chronicler's even stranger silences, which account for the many theories put forward about the early status of the Russian Church.

Some scholars appear to be surprised that a 'straightforward' solution to the problem is not accepted. Dvornik, for example, takes to task those who indulge 'in theories at variance with the hard facts of history'.²⁵ Bakhrushin also missed the point when he sought to clear up the mystery by showing that many other new churches had to wait a long time for their primates to become metropolitans.²⁶ If it had plainly been stated in the *Povest'* that Russia had no metropolitan before 1037 or 1039, or if the chronicler had given any information at all about the organisation and structure of the Church in this period, no theories would have arisen. The theories are attempts to explain the silence of the chronicler, which those who propose a 'straightforward' solution have so far failed to do, although this silence is another of the 'hard facts of history'. The 'theorists' argue that, if the chronicler wished to conceal the truth about the status of the Russian Church before 1037, its status must have differed in some way from that which it enjoyed after this date; and, more important, that the earlier status must have been considered in some respects unsatisfactory and shameful by the chronicler. These are perfectly reasonable conclusions, provided it proves possible to accept the basic assumption: namely, that the chronicler wished to conceal the early history of the Church. The validity of this assumption can best be tested by adducing evidence from the later chronicles.

The 'First Novgorod Chronicle'²⁷ is rather more informative than the Laurentian redaction of the *Povest'*. Under the year 989, it says that Vladimir was baptised together with the whole Russian land, that a metropolitan was installed in Kiev, an archbishop in Novgorod, and bishops, priests and deacons in other towns.²⁸ Under the same year, Akim is named as the first archbishop of Novgorod;²⁹ the

²⁴ This is the explanation offered by D. S. Likhachev, *PVL*, II, p. 378; and also by A. E. Presnyakov, *Lektsii po russkoy istorii*, I, Moscow, 1938, p. 109.

²⁵ F. Dvornik, *op. cit.*, p. 177; see also E. Honigmann, *op. cit.*, p. 142.

²⁶ S. V. Bakhrushin, 'K voprosu o kreshchenii Kievskoy Rusi' (*Istoriik Marksist*, 1937, 2, p. 63).

²⁷ *Novgorodskaya Pervaya Letopis' starshogo i mladshogo izvodov*, ed. A. N. Nasonov, Moscow-Leningrad, 1950, hereinafter referred to in the footnotes as *NPL*.

²⁸ *NPL*, p. 159. This is repeated in the *Troitsa* redaction, *ibid.*, p. 541.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

names of the Russian metropolitans and the archbishops of Novgorod are listed in chronological order; and the Russian episcopal sees are designated.³⁰ Theopemptus is stated to have been the first metropolitan.³¹ In an appendix to the chronicle, however, a different list of metropolitans is given.³² Here, Theopemptus occupies fourth place after Leontii, Mikhail, and Ioann; whilst Akim of Kherson heads the lists of bishops, not archbishops, of Novgorod.³³ Il'ya is named as the first archbishop of Novgorod,³⁴ and he, according to the 'First Novgorod Chronicle', was installed only in 1165.³⁵

In Vladimir's 'Church Statute' it is stated that Leon was the first Russian metropolitan and had been appointed by the Patriarch Photius of Constantinople (858–67 and 878–86).³⁶ This information is repeated in another appendix to the 'First Novgorod Chronicle', the *Pravilo Zakonno o Tserkovnykh Lyudekh*, with the date 988.³⁷ Photius is also named as the patriarch of Constantinople at the time of Vladimir's conversion in the 'Nikon Chronicle', but the metropolitan whom he sent to Russia is called Mikhail, and it is recorded that he was a Syrian by birth.³⁸ Mikhail is said to have died in 992 and to have been succeeded by Leont, who was also appointed by Photius.³⁹ But in the *Stepennaya Kniga*, which tells the same story, the name of the patriarch is given as Nicholas Chrysoberges,⁴⁰ who was indeed patriarch at this time. In 1004, according to the 'Nikon Chronicle', Leon (or Leont) imprisoned Adrian, a Bogomil heretic;⁴¹ but four years later, under 1008, it is the Metropolitan Ioann who is said to have built a stone church in Kiev and another in Pereyaslavl'.⁴² Many other chronicles refer to Leon as the first metropolitan,⁴³ but in others the order of names is changed, some placing Mikhail first.⁴⁴

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 163–4.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 473.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 480. The reference to Photius is of course an obvious anachronism, but there is nevertheless a grain of truth in the persistent tradition, found in many of the later chronicles, that attributed to him the establishment of a church hierarchy in Russia. The Russians who had attacked Constantinople in 860 (for the attack, see A. A. Vasiliev, *The Russian Attack on Constantinople in 860* (Mediaeval Academy of America, Publication no. 46, Cambridge, Mass., 1946) had later been converted to Christianity, and it was Photius who had sent them a bishop (Photius, *Epistolae*, PG, 102, cols. 736–7). This fact was remembered long after the details of the earlier conversion had been forgotten, and Photius's name therefore became linked with the second conversion of the Russians, in the reign of Vladimir.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 478.

³⁸ *Patriarshaya ili Nikonovskaya Letopis'*, *Polnoye Sobraniye Russkikh Letopisey* (hereinafter PSRL), IX, St Petersburg, 1862, p. 57.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁴⁰ *Kniga Stepennaya Tsarskago Rodosloviya*, PSRL, XXI, St Petersburg, 1908, 1913, p. 113.

⁴¹ PSRL, IX, p. 68. See also D. Obolensky, *The Bogomils*, Cambridge, 1948, appendix IV, p. 277.

⁴² PSRL, IX, p. 69.

⁴³ For example, *Novgorodskaya Vtoraya Letopis'*, PSRL, III, St Petersburg, 1841, pp. 179, 207; *Sofiyskaya Pervaya Letopis'*, PSRL, V, St Petersburg, 1851, p. 121; *Yermolinskaya Letopis'*, PSRL, XXIII, St Petersburg, 1910; *Moskovskiy Letopisniy Svod kontsa XV veka*, PSRL, XXV, Moscow-Leningrad, 1949.

⁴⁴ See PVL, II, p. 339.

Particular attention should be paid to the evidence in the various 'Lives' of SS. Boris and Gleb, as it is generally agreed that the descriptions of the miracles performed by the martyrs after their death were based on ancient records, kept in the Vyshgorod church in which their relics were preserved.⁴⁵ Both the *Chteniye o zhitii i o pogublenii blazhennuyu strastoterptsu Borisa i Gleba* of Nestor and the anonymous *Skazaniye i strast' i pokhvala svyatuyu mucheniku Borisa i Gleba*,⁴⁶ sometimes attributed to the monk Jacob,⁴⁷ speak of the part played by Ioann in the first translation of the relics of the saints which, in Shakhmatov's opinion,⁴⁸ took place in 1020 or 1026. There is, however, some confusion with regard to Ioann's title. In the *Chteniye* he is called an archbishop eight times⁴⁹ and a metropolitan twice:⁵⁰ in the *Skazaniye* he is called a metropolitan seven times⁵¹ and an archbishop three times.⁵² Thietmar of Merseburg might appear to settle the question of Ioann's title, since he refers to an archbishop of Kiev who greeted Svyatopolk in 1018 after his victory over Yaroslav with the aid of Polish troops,⁵³ but, as will be shown, Thietmar's evidence can be interpreted in more than one way.

Thus, the later chronicles and also the 'Lives' of SS. Boris and Gleb strongly suggest that the primate of the Russian Church was a metropolitan from the time of Vladimir's conversion, and that the first metropolitan had been appointed by the patriarch of Constantinople. There is less unanimity on the question of the identity of the metropolitans who preceded Theopemptus. In all the lists of earlier metropolitans, Ioann is always placed immediately before Theopemptus. Since the 'Lives' of SS. Boris and Gleb also affirm that he was metropolitan (or archbishop) in the 1020s, there are good grounds for believing that both his name and his position in the lists are correct. There must be more doubt about the remaining two names, Leontius (Leon, Leont, Leontii) and Mikhail. In some sources the former is placed first, in others the latter. The claims of Leontius to be considered the first metropolitan are supported by the evidence of the *Stepennaya Kniga*, which has it that he was appointed in 991 by the Patriarch Nicholas Chrysoberges of Constantinople and arrived in Russia in the following year.⁵⁴ Moreover, a 'Metropolitan

⁴⁵ A. A. Shakhmatov, *Razyskaniya*, pp. 56 ff.; M. D. Priselkov, *op. cit.*; N. N. Il'in, *Letopisnaya stat'ya 6523 goda i yeyo istochnik*, Moscow, 1957, p. 27.

⁴⁶ The texts of both works are to be found in D. I. Abramovich, *Zhitiya svyatykh muchenikov Borisa i Gleba i tserkovnyye sluzhby im*, *Pamyatniki drevnerusskoy literatury*, II, Petrograd, 1916.

⁴⁷ See N. N. Il'in, *op. cit.*, pp. 28 ff.

⁴⁸ A. A. Shakhmatov, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

⁴⁹ D. I. Abramovich, *Zhitiya* . . ., pp. 17 (three times), 18 (twice), 19 (three times).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 18 (once), 19 (once).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 53 (once), 54 (twice), 55 (four times).

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 53 (twice), 54 (once).

⁵³ Thietmar, *Chronicon*, *MGHS*, III, VIII, c. 16.

⁵⁴ *PSRL*, XXI, p. 113.

Leontius of Preslav in Russia' (Λέοντος μητροπολίτου τῆς ἐν Ῥωσῖα Πρεσθλάβας)⁵⁵ is mentioned in the title of a polemical tract against the Roman Catholic Church which was written at about this time, although some scholars reject the possibility of identifying the two.⁵⁶ Mikhail is a more enigmatic figure, for in the sources he is persistently linked with the Patriarch Photius. For this reason, Golubinsky,⁵⁷ Shakhmatov,⁵⁸ and Priselkov⁵⁹ identify him with the bishop whom Photius had sent to Kiev in the reign of Askold and Dir. This conclusion can be accepted. Mikhail is conveniently made to die soon after his arrival in Russia, and this suggests that his name was inserted by later chroniclers who, having introduced him, were then obliged to remove him from the scene before recording the arrival of the first real metropolitan. It seems most likely, therefore, that Leontius was the first metropolitan, and that he came to Russia in 992. He was succeeded by Ioann, some time between 1004 and 1008, and Ioann was followed by Theopemptus.

There is no shred of evidence in the Russian sources to warrant the belief that a metropolitan see was established in Russia for the first time in 1037 or 1039, although this is a belief shared by many scholars.⁶⁰ It is based largely on the entries under these years in the *Povest'*, and it is therefore necessary to examine them rather more closely. Under 1037 the adjective 'metropolitan' is used, but is applied to the St Sophia: 'zalozhi zhe [i.e. Yaroslav] i tserkov' svyatyya Sof'ya, mitropol'yu';⁶¹ i.e. Yaroslav founded the metropolitan church (i.e. cathedral) of St Sophia. Under 1039 the Metropolitan Theopemptus is named, but nothing is said about his installation: 'Svyashchena byst' tserky svyatyya Bogoroditsya, yuzhe sozda Volodimer, otets Yaroslavl', mitropolitan Feopemptom.'⁶² The fact that the chronicler does not hesitate to mention Theopemptus under 1039 and devotes a great deal of space under 1037 to the activities of Yaroslav, whom he portrays as a great champion of Christian enlightenment, makes it unthinkable that he would have missed the opportunity of recording at the same time the installation of Russia's first metropolitan. His whole aim was to extol Yaroslav; to proclaim his piety and his achievements. The establishment of a metropolitan see in Russia

⁵⁵ E. E. Golubinsky, *op. cit.*, I, i, p. 328. The significance of the title will be discussed below.

⁵⁶ M. D. Priselkov, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

⁵⁷ E. E. Golubinsky, *op. cit.*, I, i, p. 279.

⁵⁸ A. A. Shakhmatov, 'Korsunskaya legenda', p. 1100.

⁵⁹ M. D. Priselkov, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-40.

⁶⁰ Bakhrushin, *op. cit.*, p. 62; Priselkov, *op. cit.*, pp. 42 ff.; *PVL*, II, p. 378; F. Dvornik, *op. cit.*, p. 178; Zernov, *op. cit.*, pp. 431-2. Typical are the conclusions of Zernov who asserts that the building of the St Sophia and the reconsecration of Vladimir's church of the Tithe 'implies an ecclesiastical revolution' (p. 432).

⁶¹ *PVL*, I, p. 102.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 103.

would have been the crowning glory of Yaroslav's reign, an event of far greater significance than the building of churches and monasteries and the translation of books. The silence of the *Povest'* on this point is as expressive as the positive evidence of the later chronicles. Obviously if the chronicler did not mention the erection of a metropolitan see under 1037, when listing the achievements of Yaroslav, it was because Russian primates had been metropolitans for a long time before this date.

This conclusion is supported by the testimony of Yachya of Antioch, who reports that Basil II sent Vladimir a metropolitan and bishops.⁶³ Yachya may be regarded as a particularly reliable witness, for he lived in Antioch from about 1014 and is likely to have had access to contemporary sources.⁶⁴ It is he alone who shows the causal connection between Vladimir's conversion, the rising of Bardas Phocas, and Vladimir's marriage to Anna.⁶⁵

The last link in the chain of evidence was supplied by Honigmann.⁶⁶ He showed that the date of the establishment of a metropolitan see in Russia could be determined by its position in the *Notitia* of the patriarchate of Constantinople. In the list of Leo VI and the Patriarch Nicholas Mysticus, issued between 901 and 907, there are 51 metropoleis and 51 archbishoprics. A comparison of this list with the *Notitia* of Alexius Comnenus (1081–1118) showed that 30 new metropoleis had been established in the intervening period, including that of Russia. The problem was to determine the date of the erection of the metropolis of Alania, which immediately follows the Russian metropolis in the *Notitia*.⁶⁷ The rest of the story may be quoted in Honigmann's own words: 'In 1922 G. Ficker published a document concerning the patriarchal monastery of S. Epiphanius at Kerasus, dated May 1024. In that text an older synodical decree is quoted, viz. a *Typikon* of the year 6506 (1 September 997–31 August 998) in favour of Metropolitan Nikolaos of Alania. Accordingly, the metropolitan see of Alania already existed before the end of the 10th century, a fact from which it results that the metropolis Russia was likewise created before 997–8. This implies without any doubt that it was erected by Patriarch Nikolaos Chrysoberges soon after Vladimir's baptism, probably between 989 and 991.'⁶⁸ In Honigmann's opinion the first metropolitan was a certain Theophylactus who, according to the 'Church History' of Nicephorus Callistus, was transferred to Russia from the metropolis of Sebasteia in the reign of Basil II (976–1025).⁶⁹

Dvornik reviewed Honigmann's whole theory, and while he

⁶³ Baron V. R. Rozen, *Imperator Vasiliy Bolgaroboytsa*, St Petersburg, 1883, p. 24.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 215 ff.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 23–4.

⁶⁶ E. Honigmann, *op. cit.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 148 ff.

agreed that it was 'a good solution if it could be proved', he decided that it could not.⁷⁰ He showed that the Theophylactus referred to by Callistus was very unlikely to have been metropolitan of Sebasteia in Armenia, as Honigmann had thought: he was almost certainly bishop of Sebaste.⁷¹ Dvornik's objections to this part of Honigmann's theory are convincing,⁷² especially as there is no mention of a Theophylactus in any of the lists of metropolitans in the Russian sources: but he overlooks one very important point. Even if it is agreed that Theophylactus is unlikely to have been the first Russian metropolitan, the most important part of Honigmann's thesis—the conclusion that the Russian metropolis was erected soon after Vladimir's conversion—remains unshaken. Since the evidence from all the other written sources points in the same direction, this can now be accepted as established; and, incidentally, Dvornik's suggestion that the Russian Church was under the supervision of the archbishop of Kherson before 1037 must be rejected.⁷³

In a sense, therefore, the mystery of the early status of the Russian Church can be considered to have been solved long ago. But the solution outlined above has not been generally accepted because it does not explain the silence and ambiguity of the *Povest'*. In searching for the key to this latter problem, however, scholars have tended to look in the wrong direction. As has already been pointed out, all the various theories put forward rest on the assumption that the chronicler wished to conceal the truth about the early status of the Church. But since it is clear that the status of the Church did not change in 1037, it is clear also that this assumption is unjustified. Can the mystery be explained by some other change which took place at about this time? After 1037 the Russian primate was a metropolitan appointed by the patriarch of Constantinople, and he resided in Kiev; before 1037 he was also a metropolitan and was also appointed from Constantinople: but did he reside in Kiev?

Over fifty years ago Golubinsky pointed out that there was every reason to believe that Pereyasavl' had been the residence of the first Russian metropolitans,⁷⁴ and in more recent times this view has been accepted by M. V. Levchenko.⁷⁵ Golubinsky based his hypothesis, firstly, on the reference to 'Metropolitan Leontius of Preslav in Russia' in the polemical work against the Roman Catholic Church referred to earlier; and, secondly, on a passage in the *Povest'*, under

⁷⁰ F. Dvornik, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² See also Levchenko's criticism, *Ocherki po istorii russko-vizantiiskikh otnosheniy*, p. 337.

⁷³ F. Dvornik, *op. cit.*, pp. 177–8. Zernov's hypothesis ('Vladimir and the Origin of the Russian Church') can be criticised on the same grounds. Though Honigmann's work is noted in Zernov's bibliography, the latter's conclusions are nevertheless based on the assumption that Russia had no metropolitan before 1037.

⁷⁴ E. E. Golubinsky, *op. cit.*, pp. 328–9.

⁷⁵ M. V. Levchenko, *op. cit.*, p. 378.

the year 1089, in which it is explicitly stated that Pereyaslavl' was formerly the Russian metropolis: 'be bo prezhe v Pereyaslavli mitropol'ya'.⁷⁶ This fits in with the indications in the 'Lives' of SS. Boris and Gleb, noted by a number of scholars,⁷⁷ that the Metropolitan Ioann did not reside in Kiev; and it also explains the evidence of Thietmar of Merseburg, who testified to the existence of an archbishop of Kiev in 1018.⁷⁸ Unfortunately neither Golubinsky nor Levchenko pursued this interesting line of enquiry; nor did they realise the connection between Pereyaslavl' as the Russian metropolis and the silence of the *Povest'*.

The chronicler left another clue. Under the year 992 he inserted the legend explaining the circumstances in which the town of Pereyaslavl' had been founded.⁷⁹ It tells the story of a young Russian tanner of great strength but small stature who defeated a giant Pecheneg in single combat: a feat which so demoralised the remainder of the Pecheneg army that the Russians were able to gain an easy victory over them. Vladimir founded a town by the ford which marked the scene of the epic struggle and called it Pereyaslavl' 'because the lad had taken the glory' ('zane pereyaslavu otrok t').⁸⁰ Why did the chronicler record the legend at precisely this point? If Pereyaslavl' really was the first metropolis, there is every reason to believe that it was founded in 992. This was the year in which, according to the *Stepennaya Kniga*,⁸¹ the Metropolitan Leontius arrived in Russia, and it seems logical to conclude that Vladimir started to build the town at about the same time.

There is one apparently serious objection to this hypothesis. Pereyaslavl' is mentioned in the treaty with Byzantium of 911,⁸² and consequently it would seem that it could hardly have been founded by Vladimir in 992. But the answer to this objection can be found in M. N. Tikhomirov's monograph on Kievan towns.⁸³ Tikhomirov writes:

The history of Pereyaslavl' is to a certain extent a mystery. It is particularly difficult to understand why Pereyaslavl' came to occupy so prominent a position amongst the Russian towns of the 11th century, and also the reasons for its rapid decline. V. Lyaskoronsky (*Istoriya Pereyaslavskoy zemli*, Kiev, 1897, pp. 157-9) made an attempt to explain the rise and decline of the town in his monograph on the Land of Pereyaslavl' . . . according to Lyaskoronsky, there were three reasons why Pereyaslavl' gained the status of a large Russian town: trade; its strategic position; ecclesiastical policy. On closer inspection, however,

⁷⁶ *PVL*, I, p. 137; E. E. Golubinsky, *op. cit.*, I, i, pp. 328-9.

⁷⁷ M. D. Priselkov, *op. cit.*, p. 50; H. Koch, 'Byzanz, Ochrid und Kiev', p. 275; F. Dvornik, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

⁷⁸ Thietmar, *Chronicon*, *MGHS*, III, VIII, c. 16.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁸¹ *PSRL*, XXI, p. 113.

⁷⁹ *PVL*, I, pp. 84-5.

⁸² *PVL*, I, p. 24.

⁸³ M. N. Tikhomirov, *Drevnerusskiye goroda*, 2nd ed., Moscow, 1956.

all three reasons are seen to do little to explain the growth of the town. In the first place it is not clear what it was that made Pereyaslavl' a favourable trading centre. The town stood some distance from the Dnieper, on the river Trubezh, which had never had the importance of a large water route. The forward position of Pereyaslavl' on the frontiers of Russia would hinder rather than facilitate its economic growth, since the town was constantly obliged to repel Polovtsian attacks. Finally, the establishment in Pereyaslavl' of a bishopric was the result, not the cause, of its economic and political significance.

The only correct explanation for the flourishing of Pereyaslavl' in the 10-11th centuries is to be seen in the fact that it was the centre for extensive adjacent areas on the left bank of the Dnieper where, in the Kievan period, while there were a large number of small fortified outposts, one cannot trace a single town of any importance. Perhaps the original site of Pereyaslavl' should be sought at the mouth of the river Trubezh where, at the end of the 10th century, according to the supposition of M. A. Maksimovich, the town of Ustye was situated. . . . This would explain the legend that Pereyaslavl' was a town built on a new site.⁸⁴

In a footnote Tikhomirov tentatively suggests that this was connected with the establishment there of the Russian metropolis.⁸⁵

There is thus no reason to doubt that a new Pereyaslavl' was built by Vladimir in 992 as the seat of the metropolitans of Russia. Moreover, it is possible to suggest why ancient Kiev, the capital, was not chosen for this purpose. It appears that the text of the 'Radziwill Chronicle' is in places illustrated by drawings which have an allegorical or symbolical significance and might almost be termed heraldic devices. Whenever Pereyaslavl' is mentioned in the 'Radziwill Chronicle', it is accompanied by a drawing of an idol. This indicates that the town had been famous not only as a centre of trade or as a strategic strongpoint but also as the site of a well-known pagan temple.⁸⁶ Here lies the answer to the question. Pereyaslavl' had clearly been the focal point of Kievan paganism, and Vladimir therefore decided to symbolise the victory of Christianity over the old gods by building a new Pereyaslavl' and making it the centre of Russian Christianity.

If this was the real reason why Vladimir built a new Pereyaslavl', it is obvious that the legend of the Russian tanner was invented by the chronicler to conceal the truth. In doing so he created many difficulties for himself. If Pereyaslavl' was not to be mentioned as the metropolis, the first two Russian metropolitans also had to be ignored,

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 309-10.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 311.

⁸⁶ I am deeply indebted for this information to Dr N. E. Andreyev of Cambridge University who was given it by the well-known Soviet historian, Academician B. A. Rybakov, during a conversation at an Anglo-Soviet historical conference which met in London from 15 to 19 September 1958.

together with a large part of the early history of the Russian Church. In particular, the chronicler could not afford to disclose the fact that Kiev had only been an archbishopric. This explains the mystery surrounding Anastas of Kherson. He was undoubtedly the archbishop of Kiev mentioned by Thietmar of Merseburg; but he was not the primate of the Russian Church. Here one other detail falls into place. It has always been difficult to reconcile the part played by Anastas in the fall of Kherson⁸⁷ with the indications that he was a member of the clergy. That he should have betrayed the city to Vladimir at all was strange; but that he should have done so with the aid of a bow and arrow was even stranger. In one of the redactions of the 'Life' of Vladimir (*Zhitiye Vladimira osobogo sostava*), however, a different version of the story of the fall of Kherson is told. Here, it is not Anastas who fires the arrow with the message but a certain Zhd'bern.⁸⁸ Shakhmatov was of the opinion that this was the original version of the story, and that whoever had invented the *Korsun* legend had substituted Anastas for Zhd'bern.⁸⁹ Shakhmatov's hypothesis is undoubtedly correct; and the reason for the substitution is now apparent. The chronicler had to explain why Anastas later played so prominent a part in the life of the Kievan Church, without revealing that he was an archbishop. He therefore made it appear that Vladimir had Anastas to thank for the capture of Kherson, and that he had rewarded him by entrusting to him the church of the Holy Mother of God and the management of its income.

There remains one vital question to be answered. Why did the chronicler go to such lengths to conceal the truth about Pereyaslavl'? This is not the place for a detailed answer; but the main points may be summarised here. Pereyaslavl' and Kiev became identified with the protagonists in the struggle for power which developed after the death of Vladimir I in 1015; and their fate was determined by its outcome. When Mstislav defeated Yaroslav in 1024, he chose to retain the left bank of the Dnieper with Chernigov and Pereyaslavl', and gave to Yaroslav the right bank with Kiev.⁹⁰ In doing so he showed clearly on which side of the river political power was to lie. But the position was reversed when Mstislav died in 1036. Yaroslav was now the unchallenged ruler of the whole of Russia; Kiev its unchallenged capital. The building of the St Sophia Cathedral in 1037 indicates that the seat of the metropolitan was transferred from Pereyaslavl' to Kiev in this same year. Steps were also taken to ensure that the true facts of the struggle for power should never be recorded, for the

⁸⁷ For this episode, see *PVL*, I, p. 76.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, II, p. 337.

⁸⁹ A. A. Shakhmatov, *Razyskaniya*, pp. 140–1; 'Korsunskaya legenda', pp. 1086, 1116–18.

⁹⁰ *PVL*, I, pp. 99–100.

historical Yaroslav bears little resemblance to the saintly Yaroslav the Wise who emerges from the pages of the contemporary sources. As N. N. Il'in has shown, there is every reason to believe that it was Yaroslav, not 'the accursed Svyatopolk', who killed his brother Boris.⁹¹ To conceal these facts a whole page of early Russian history was torn out and rewritten, and in the process Pereyasavl', the first Russian metropolis, was lost.

⁹¹ N. N. Il'in, *Letopisnaya stat'ya 6523 goda i yeyo istochnik*, pp. 71–169.